DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 287 512 IR 052 199

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TITLE Information Resources for Archivists and Records Administrators. A Report and Recommendations.
INSTITUTION National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, Albany, NY.
SPONS AGENCY National Historical Publications and Records Commission, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 46p.; For a related document, see IR 052 198.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Information; *Archives; Budgets; *Information Needs; *Information Services; *Information Sources; National Organizations; Needs Assessment; Planning; *Resource Centers
IDENTIFIERS Archivists; National Archives and Records Administration; *Records Management

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to assess the information needs of the entire archives and records community and to evaluate the benefits that might be gained from the establishment of a clearinghouse or information center on archives and records. The first of three major sections of the report, entitled "Background and Analysis," describes the growing demand for better information services; provides a profile of the records community; and discusses existing sources of information, information providers serving allied professions, and planning for an archives and records management center. The second section, "Options for Improving Information Services for the Records Community," considers both structural and service options and placement options. The third section presents two recommendations: (1) that a modest archives and records resource center be established, and (2) that the NARA (National Archives and Records Administration) library be designated as the official depository library for archives- and records-related material and that the development of the NARA bibliographic database be encouraged and supported. Appendices include a selected catalog of 11 information sources for archivists and other records practitioners; a projected budget for the recommended archives and records resource center; and a listing of Archival Information Clearinghouse Project Conference participants. Eleven notes are provided. (KM)

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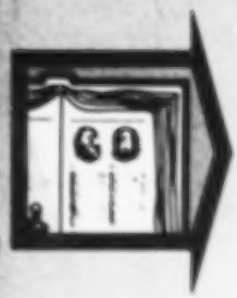

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INFORMATION RESOURCES

for Archivists and Records Administrators

A Report and Recommendations

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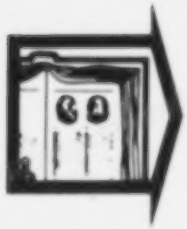

INFORMATION RESOURCES

for Archivists and Records Administrators

A Report and Recommendations

Prepared by

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for the

National Association of
Government Archives and Records Administrators

under a grant from the

National Historical Publications and
Records Commission

Albany, New York
1987

Prepared under a grant from the
National Historical Publications
and Records Commission

Distributed by
National Association of Government Archives
and Records Administrators (NAGARA)
Executive Secretariat
New York State Archives
10A75 Cultural Education Center
Albany, New York 12230

NAGARA is an Adjunct Organization
of the Council of State Governments

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Walch, Victoria Irons, 1950-
Information resources for archivists and records administrators.

1. Archives—Information services—United States. I. National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators. II. United States. National Historical Publications and Records Commission. III. Title. CD3021.W35 1987 025.17'14 87-7912

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FOREWORD

Information Resources for Archivists and Records Administrators represents the culmination of a study of archival and records management information exchange needs that began in 1984. It originated with a request from the NAGARA's predecessor, the National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators (NASARA) to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) for support to establish an information clearinghouse system for government archivists and records administrators. NHPRC decided not to support a project that would meet what it saw as only part of the information interchange problem facing the nation's archival and records communities. Instead, it offered a grant to conduct a comprehensive study for the entire archival and records community. NASARA accepted the challenge and engaged Victoria Irons Walch, an independent consulting archivist, to carry out the study and write a report and recommendations. The work continued as NASARA became NAGARA in 1985, and has now produced this report.

Ms. Walch found that existing information resources are clearly not meeting the needs of records practitioners. She found that people want more systematic access to written information on recordskeeping practices and procedures, better ways of identifying and getting copies of the materials they need, and more efficient mechanisms for drawing on each other's experiences in addressing common problems.

The report explores options for improving this situation and recommends the one that seems most practical: a modest, proactive, self-supporting archives and records information center, most likely headquartered at the National Archives and Records Administration.

The report provides a thorough discussion of information interchange needs. The discussion of the options is thorough and the recommendation seems sound. NAGARA hopes that the report will be helpful in moving toward establishment of an information center. But many important questions remain. What is the best way to get the clearinghouse started? How would it be administered? Who would pay for it? How could it be sure to reach people who most need the information? How would it work in tandem with professional organizations? How would its effectiveness be measured?

These questions remain to be addressed; the present report gives us the analysis and basis for addressing them. Many people contributed to the production of the report, and we are grateful to them for their suggestions and assistance. We are most indebted, however, to Vicki Walch for her conscientious investigation, thorough information gathering, sound analysis, and clear and well reasoned conclusions and recommendations. ***Information Resources for Archivists and Records Administrators*** is truly Vicki Walch's report, and NAGARA and others who will benefit from it are indebted to her for her good work.

Bruce W. Dearstyne
Executive Director,
National Association of Government
Archives and Records Administrators

PREFACE

Project Methodology

The goals of this project were to assess the information needs of the entire archives and records community and to evaluate the benefits that might be gained from the establishment of a clearinghouse or information center on archives and records. The project sought to involve and address the concerns of all who are responsible for preserving and providing access to records of any kind, including professional archivists, records and information managers, and government officials, especially those at the local level.

The primary product is this final report which is designed to provide information and guidance to the organizations who sponsored and funded the project, the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and to the records community as a whole so that they can individually and together make informed decisions about what efforts should be made in this direction and by whom. The report describes existing information sources for the records community and their shortcomings, analyzes the functions and operations of information centers generally in order to determine what improvements such a center could provide over existing information services, and proposes the several options available for creating better mechanisms for information exchange within the records community. The report concludes with the consulting archivist's recommendations for further action.

The work of the project had several components.

(1) *Conferences.* Two conferences were held to elicit the participation of all who could benefit from the establishment of an archives and records information center. The first, held May 8 and 9, 1985, was designed to evaluate the needs of full-time archivists, records managers, and allied professionals by inviting representatives of the major professional associations, national institutions, and funding agencies to participate. Twenty individuals representing 12 organizations or institutions in the fields of archives, library and information science, and records management attended the 1½-day meeting. The second, held June 17, 1985, was directed more specifically at the needs of government recordskeepers at the federal, state, and local level. It gathered 23 individuals representing 15 organizations or institutions. The names of the participants in these conferences and the institutions or organizations they represented are included in Appendix C.

(2) *Analysis of other information services.* The consulting archivist on the project examined the services and operations of other clearinghouses and information centers serving allied professions to determine their applicability to the needs of the records community, gather hard figures on financial and personnel requirements, and ensure that the records community's needs were not already being met elsewhere. Detailed discussions of several of these information centers follow on pages 9-12.

(3) *Expert assistance.* Early in the project we contracted with an information specialist to assist us in analyzing our needs. Molly Wolfe of Informatics, Inc., Rockville, Maryland, conducted the workshop during the May conference and evaluated the feasibility of the recommendations contained in the final report. We have also frequently consulted informally with others who currently operate information centers and have been willing to share the benefits of their experience with us.

(4) *Independent research.* Although the analytical and scholarly literature on clearinghouses and information centers is not extensive, the consulting archivist was able to locate several useful reports that describe methods for evaluating the effectiveness of information services and the interaction of the public and private sectors in undertaking such initiatives.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

I. GROWING DEMAND FOR BETTER INFORMATION SERVICES

Individuals from all sectors of the records community have expressed increasing interest over the last several years in finding a means of improving the exchange of information about recordskeeping policies, procedures, and techniques. Two groups of records practitioners, professional archivists and local government officials, have been especially vocal in their demands and have been active in encouraging the establishment of an archives and records clearinghouse or some similar body to meet their needs.

The archival profession has recently undertaken several broad studies that have concluded that improved information services for records practitioners are essential. The latest and most extensive evaluation of the existing needs and future direction of the archival profession appears in the final report of the Society of American Archivists's Task Force on Goals and Priorities, *Planning for the Archival Profession*, published in April 1986.

> A review of the [report] clearly shows that the task force believes the publication and dissemination of information and analysis on archival concerns is of critical importance. Further, the report repeatedly calls for clearinghouse activities to gather information necessary for the evaluation of projects, programs, and personnel, to monitor developments affecting archives, and, in general, to provide "on-line" access to information.[1]

During 1982, 27 states undertook projects funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to assess the condition of historical records within their boundaries. In a summary of these assessment reports, Margaret Child of the Smithsonian Institution noted:

> Running through almost all the reports was [an expression of] the need for better mechanisms for the dissemination of information both vertically and laterally and the need for better communication links to encourage exchange of opinion and discussion among all those having anything at all to do with archives and manuscripts.

At a 1983 meeting, the managers of those projects resolved that "there must be a national clearinghouse to identify, obtain, and make available through national, regional and statewide networks, materials of broad utility."[2]

Several organizations serving the records community have instituted new information services in an attempt to respond to these repeated calls for improving the exchange of information about recordskeeping practices and techniques. Each of them focuses on a relatively narrow topic or audience within the records field. One is being developed by the Society of American Archivists to address problems associated with automated records and the application of automated techniques in managing records and repositories and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). A second established early in 1986 in the Office of Records Administration of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) focuses largely on federal records programs and practices and is striving to provide federal records officers and others in the public and private sectors with advice on records management in those areas for which NARA has responsibility (*e.g.*, vital records, disposition criteria). A third that began collecting materials in late 1986 will be operated by the Council of State Governments (CSG) on behalf of the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA), one of its affiliates, and will focus on state archival and records management information.

Additional efforts have been undertaken to serve the other sector of the records community that has been actively seeking to improve its sources of recordskeeping advice and assistance: local government officials. In 1984 the NHPRC along with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation began providing funds to the American Association for State and Local History for the establishment and operation of NICLOG, the National Information Center for Local Government Records.

These clearinghouses now operating are only a few

of the many that have been proposed formally or informally over the past several years. When in 1984 NAGARA originally requested funds to establish a clearinghouse for state-based information, the NHPRC began to question the practicality and desirability of establishing a multitude of separate information services. The Commission believed it would be profitable to explore whether one or more centralized information centers could be established to consolidate these efforts and lead to more efficient and comprehensive service. The Commission in turn requested NAGARA to undertake a study of the information needs of the entire records community in lieu of granting support for another subject-specific clearinghouse. This report is the final product of that study.

As this project began there was a consensus in the records community that it needed better mechanisms for the collection, analysis, exchange, and delivery of information about recordskeeping practices and techniques. But there were logical differences of opinion about what would constitute the best solution. Many had already concluded that a centralized information clearinghouse was necessary, but disagreements emerged when discussions began about its optimal scope and audience. Some believed that a single clearinghouse could effectively serve the needs of the entire records community while others suggested a series of interconnected clearinghouses to respond to the related but distinct requirements of such groups as archivists, records managers, and local government officials. A few were skeptical about the benefits of adding yet another organizational entity to the many already serving records practitioners and thought that it would be sufficient to enhance existing resources.

In order to determine how a new operational entity in the form of an information resource center on archives and records would best meet the needs of the records community in the United States, this report will:

- identify the individuals comprising the records community in the U.S. and analyze the factors that are motivating them to seek improved information services;
- enumerate and evaluate the sources of information most frequently consulted by the records community in the U.S.;
- describe the products, services, and internal operations of information providers serving three allied professions, both as potential but underutilized sources of valuable information for the records community and as models of how a prospective archives and records information center should or should not operate;
- examine the benefits that records practitioners hope to achieve through improved information services and list the specific products and services that the participants in this project identified as most important for a prospective information center to provide;
- explore the decisions that records practitioners must make in determining the philosophy and functions of an information center; and
- define the elements that will be essential to the success of an archives and records information center.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the report will then present options available to the records community for improving the exchange of information about recordskeeping practices and procedures. The structural and service options and the placement options are presented separately on pages 21-25 and 26-28, respectively.

The report concludes with recommendations from the consulting archivist for future action on pages 29-32.

II. PROFILE OF THE RECORDS COMMUNITY

Throughout this report, the terms "records community" and "records practitioners" are used to include all those individuals to whom are entrusted the care of records. They fall broadly into four sectors: (1) professional archivists and manuscript curators, (2) professional records and information managers, (3) allied professionals including librarians and micrographics specialists, and (4) government officials, especially at the local level, for whom the creation and retention of records is a central part of their job (*e.g.*, municipal clerks, county recorders of deeds, vital statistics officers, court administrators).

The first and fourth in this list have been the most vocal in calling for improved information exchange mechanisms, so it is their needs that are explored in most detail. While records managers and representatives of other allied professions have participated in the project and have made significant contributions to its discussions and conclusions, their interest has been far less intense than that of the other two groups. Why archivists and local government officials perceive a greater need for exchanging information about their work can only be surmised. Perhaps it results from the fact that archivists and local government officials each serve as the "end of the line" in the life cycle of records. They are the ones ultimately responsible for the long-term or permanent preservation of records. They must ensure that materials are made and remain intellectually and physically accessible to whoever requires them and that they are stored in ways that sustain their integrity and stability.[3] Records managers with no archival responsibilities, on the other hand, typically are responsible for any one body of records for only a relatively short time before it is destroyed or sent to a permanent repository. The complexities associated with long-term preservation and use certainly increase the need for certain kinds of technical knowledge among archivists and local government officials and it may also contribute to the need to develop shared solutions.

Many records practitioners share two other characteristics that increase their need for a readily identifiable source of sound information about recordskeeping policies, procedures, and techniques: (1) relative isolation from fellow practitioners and (2) varying levels of training and experience.

Many caretakers of records work in relative isolation from other practitioners. The 1982 survey of the archival profession conducted by the Society of American Archivists found that 50 percent of all archivists are employed in situations where no more than one other archivist is on the staff. Fewer than 15 percent work in an organization with as many as fifteen archivists or manuscript curators.[4] Local government officials face similar problems. Half of the 7400 members of the International Institute of Municipal Clerks reportedly work in towns and cities with populations under 5000. The one or two people responsible for making all the records-related decisions in such a situation cannot be expected to stay current with all relevant literature and research developments while also meeting the daily demands of maintaining and providing access to the material in their custody.

There are currently few formal criteria for ensuring that individuals responsible for the care of records have the proper training to fulfill the many demands of their jobs. While individual certification is being seriously considered for archivists and has been available for many years for records managers, the fact is that the number of people calling themselves professional archivists and records managers has grown rapidly in the last decade and their credentials for doing so vary widely. Newcomers to the field have an obvious need for access to reliable basic information while more experienced practitioners require a convenient way to stay abreast of new developments. The lack of standard educational requirements means that many begin their work without exposure to even the most basic literature in the field. Even if they have a sound educational background and solid experience in the field, local circumstances may or may not enable them to attend professional meetings or con-

tinuing education programs to keep their base of knowledge up to date.

In addition, for many county recorders and clerks and other government officials, care of records is a significant part, but only one part, of a larger, time-consuming job. Few have had any formal training in records management or archives administration. In the course of meeting the daily demands of their work, they rarely have the extra time necessary to locate or read even the basic archival and records management literature. They must learn the requirements of their jobs quickly. Their tenure in office generally averages only a few years. They would benefit greatly from an easily accessible system that could provide them with basic information on creating, storing, and retrieving records.

III. EXISTING SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE RECORDS COMMUNITY

Sources Consulted Most Frequently by Records Practitioners

The records community currently relies on a diffuse body of information products and services. Most are provided by agencies of the federal government or by private associations serving specific groups of professionals. Appendix A provides a selected catalog of information services of interest to records practitioners.

When asked to identify their most frequently used sources, records practitioners cited

- written materials produced by professional associations and major institutions, especially articles in newsletters, journals, and other professional publications,
- formal presentations at professional association meetings,
- informal contacts made at the same meetings,
- inquiries directed to staff in the several associations and granting organizations serving the archives and records field, and
- products issued by federal archival, records, and library agencies.

The various professional associations are the most widely recognized and frequently called upon providers of information about recordskeeping practices and techniques. They produce most of the printed literature, hold meetings once or twice a year that become important means for informal information exchanges, and have staffs of varying sizes that can be called upon to generate statistics, monitor activities in institutions across the nation, and direct projects to answer the immediate and long-term needs of the membership as a whole.

Most of the records-related products and services are provided by organizations serving specific categories of records professionals: the Society of American Archivists (SAA), the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA), the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA), the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM), the regional archival associations, and the local chapters of ARMA. The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) has also been an important source because so many of the historical agencies which it serves are responsible for the care of manuscripts and local records. Records and information managers working for federal agencies are served by the Association for Federal Information Resources Management (AFFIRM) among others.

There is a natural limitation in this heavy reliance on professional associations as information sources. Individual practitioners tend, logically, to seek information primarily or solely from those organizations of which they are members and may be completely unaware of the products and services provided by other organizations. There are few formal network arrangements among records-related organizations so that information about available services tends to flow through informal channels such as those formed by individuals who maintain multiple memberships.

Many organizations serving state and local government officials, while not concentrating exclusively on the area of records and information management, devote considerable resources in terms of staff time and expense to responding to members' needs for information about the field. Several are noteworthy because of existing programs or their ongoing interest in strengthening services in the archives and records area, including the Council of State Governments, the National Center for State Courts, the International Institute of Municipal Clerks, the National Association of Counties and its affiliate, the National Association of County Recorders and Clerks, the International City Management Association, and the National League of Cities.

The records community has also come to rely on the staffs of federal agencies to provide information about ongoing projects and the development of innovative pro-

cesses and techniques. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the Library of Congress (LC) regularly receive requests from other government agencies, private institutions, and individual practitioners for help in dealing with such technical matters as preservation or techniques for handling machine-readable records. They provide leadership in these areas because their larger staff size and budgets allow for in-depth research and development activities that smaller institutions cannot support. In some cases, albeit perhaps not frequently enough, NARA and LC have published reports of significant studies that have broad application in the archival community, thus making their findings available to a wide audience. The NARA library also stands as perhaps the single best collection of archival literature available anywhere.

One of the greatest difficulties in attempting to obtain assistance from these agencies is their sheer size and complexity. It can be difficult, even with a lengthy organizational chart to consult, to identify which office or branch to call with a specific question. To respond in part to this problem, the National Archives and the General Services Administration have each instituted clearinghouse operations to answer records-related questions.

Granting agencies, especially the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), also have become heavily used as informal links between archivists with common interests or problems. Institutions inspired to explore innovative techniques or undertake extensive projects often seek grant funds, and thus the granting agencies' staffs are often the first to hear of the newest approaches. Some of the staff members have become specialists in certain areas, such as preservation or automation, and frequently know more about that topic than anyone else in the profession. The *ad hoc* nature of this expertise, however, means that records practitioners discover and use it more by luck than by design.

Training programs provide a traditional method of passing basic information and techniques to new practitioners. University-based master's degree programs with an archival component can become resource centers not only for their students but for other researchers as well by developing reference collections to serve the archival curriculum. The two-week Modern Archives Institute held at the National Archives provides basic archival education to some 80 individuals each year. Hundreds more enroll in a variety of short-term workshops, covering everything from basic to advanced topics, that are sponsored by national and regional professional associations or by government records agencies such as NARA and the various state archives.

Shortcomings in Existing Information Resources

As described above, there are a number of valuable information products and services available to archivists and records administrators. Yet there is a continuing and growing agitation for the establishment of an information "clearinghouse" to serve the field. Existing resources are clearly not meeting the current needs of records practitioners despite their quantity and variety.

Several factors are preventing the existing providers from fully meeting the information needs of the records community:

- The organizations currently providing much of the information have overlapping mandates and, with the lack of a single centralized coordinating body, a duplication of effort exists in some areas while other important topics of concern are left unattended.
- Existing sources must rely on voluntary, often sporadic, participation by their information providers, leading to uneven coverage. Users cannot necessarily expect to find comprehensive information on any one topic, only that which someone else has taken the initiative to provide.
- In many cases, access to desired information may be difficult to obtain because of the size and complexity of the organization that houses it or because channels are *ad hoc*, informal ones that are not easily entered by newcomers or outsiders.
- Each individual practitioner must keep abreast of the developments through a combination of some 10 or 15 key sources, an impossible task to manage effectively.
- Many practitioners are simply unaware that certain resources exist.
- All of the professional societies, as a group the largest body of information suppliers, share an inability to dedicate sufficient personnel and funds to information activities under existing programs.
- The large federal agencies operate under similar budget constraints so that, with a few notable exceptions, they can provide information only as a by-product of their ongoing programs and not as an end in itself.

IV. INFORMATION PROVIDERS SERVING ALLIED PROFESSIONS

Other closely related professional fields have faced similar problems with information exchange and have developed a variety of services to help resolve them. Three specific operations are worth examining in some detail: the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC); the Systems and Procedures Exchange Center (SPEC) in the Association of Research Libraries; and the Museum Reference Center in the Smithsonian Institution. At a minimum these organizations offer potentially valuable but currently underutilized sources of information for records practitioners. More important, they enable useful observations about how specific kinds of information-providing organizations function within similar professional and occupational settings. The records community can learn from these examples, adopting the successful approaches they demonstrate while, it is hoped, avoiding their weaknesses.

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) was established by the federal government in 1966 to provide access to literature on education. In December 1986 ERIC's parent agency, the federal Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), released a preliminary report recommending substantive changes in ERIC's organization and scope of coverage. The discussion that follows describes in some detail ERIC's current structure and policies, especially as they relate to the information needs of the records community. The section concludes with a brief enumeration of the changes proposed by OERI and comments on how they might affect the establishment or operations of an information resource center devoted to archives and records.

ERIC currently is composed of (1) a central office within the federal Office of Educational Research and Improvement that establishes policy, handles funding, and monitors the entire system, (2) 16 subject-specialized "clearinghouses," each responsible for collecting and analyzing the literature within its specialty, and (3) a document storage and delivery facility.

"Education" as used by ERIC is broadly defined and includes library and information services; the U.S. Department of Education and its predecessors have had significant responsibility for the federal government's service to the library field for many years. As a result, one of the 16 clearinghouses operated by ERIC, the Information Resources (IR) Clearinghouse, located at Syracuse University, handles all library and information science literature. Archives- and records-related materials also fall under its jurisdiction.

ERIC publishes abstracts of documents along with subject and name indexes in *Resources in Education* (RIE), a publication that is available in many academic and some public libraries nationwide. Actual copies of most of the documents can be ordered, in paper or microfiche, from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) for a relatively small fee. Many libraries also acquire the complete set of ERIC documents produced annually on microfiche for viewing in-house.

Organizations submitting documents for inclusion in ERIC have a choice of how they want copies of the documents made available. They may authorize (1) a "level 1" release enabling EDRS to provide either a paper or microfiche copy at the user's choice, or (2) a "level 2" release allowing EDRS to sell only microfiche copies. Under a level 2 release, the document abstract in RIE includes information on how to order paper copies from the submitting organization. Even under level 2, the submitting organization can choose at a later date to discontinue its own distribution of paper copies and begin referring all requests to EDRS under a revised authorization.

ERIC solicits a wide variety of documents for the system, including research and technical reports, position papers, monographs and treatises, speeches and presentations, feasibility studies, instructional materials, man-

uals and handbooks, bibliographies, legislation and regulations, glossaries and thesauri, statistical compilations, and dissertations.

While there is a widespread misconception among archivists that archives- and records-related documents are not welcome in ERIC, the IR Clearinghouse acquisitions director is actually quite eager to have its coverage of the records community's products increase. An informal scan of the Information Resources Clearinghouse entries in RIE for the last four years turned up several important archival documents, but they represent only a fraction of those produced by archivists that meet the criteria for inclusion. Notable examples of those appearing were the New York state assessment report, *Toward a Usable Past*, the final reports of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin's machine-readable records project, the final report of the Committee on the Records of Government, and several UNESCO RAMP (Records and Archives Management Programme) reports.

ERIC would seem to provide an excellent vehicle for distributing and ensuring the permanent availability of literature on archives and records topics. Several readily identifiable groups of documents come to mind as logical additions to the ERIC system: (1) final reports and/or products of NHPRC- and NEH-funded projects, (2) research project reports, technical analyses, and procedural manuals produced by NARA and LC, (3) committee and task force reports from SAA, ARMA, NAGARA, and other professional organizations, (4) typescripts of speeches and other oral presentations that might otherwise not become part of the printed literature. There is no guarantee that everything submitted will be accepted by ERIC. In part, the number of archives- and records-related entries will depend on the overall quotas established for the IR Clearinghouse. But certainly a significant majority of potential submissions from the field would seem eligible.

Some time ago SAA declined an IR Clearinghouse invitation to include all SAA publications, evidently because the previous executive director was concerned about a potential loss of revenue. The ERIC staff argues that a Level 2 authorization, wherein only microfiche is available from EDRS and paper copies must be ordered from the submitting organization, actually increases the submitter's sales because it disseminates information about the availability of the document to a much larger audience than would otherwise be aware of it.

Regardless of how organizations choose to handle the distribution of profit-making publications, however, ERIC could provide an excellent means of keeping key documents with limited or no revenue-producing potential available at no long-term expense to the creating organization. The organization could produce enough to constitute a six-month supply, the usual length of time it takes ERIC to process the document and make it available through EDRS, then simply refer inquiries to EDRS when its stock is depleted. ERIC's volume is so high that its on-demand reproduction unit cost is considerably lower than what an archival repository might charge for photocopying a document of the same size. A 49-page report ordered from EDRS would cost $3.65; a photocopy order of the same size placed with the National Archives would cost $14.70.

Archivists should also be aware of how much literature from the closely related fields of library and information science already appears in ERIC. Of particular interest might be some of the reports prepared by various information-consulting firms under federal and other contracts on topics that have applicability to the care of records. Examples from the last several years included studies of videodisk technology, preservation methods, collection development, and thesaurus construction.

To make ERIC truly useful for the archives and records field would require (1) an education process that would inform records practitioners about the availability and use of the ERIC system, and (2) a mobilization effort that would actively encourage organizations, institutions, and individuals working in the field to submit all relevant documents to the system. Because ERIC is now most accessible through academic libraries, it will best serve those records professionals who are pursuing some kind of research and is not likely to meet the needs of the majority of records professionals who operate outside of academe. Some might also argue that the use of ERIC for document retrieval and delivery will weaken the support and use of any potential archives and records information center offering similar services.

ERIC's parent agency, OERI, has been studying the effectiveness of ERIC's current delivery system and has recommended that several shifts be made:

- from primarily serving the needs of academic researchers to giving proper attention to the needs of a far broader and diverse education community;
- from stressing an archival role to greater emphasis on the dissemination of useful information;
- from highlighting the collection of unpublished materials to giving more balanced treatment to the full range of valuable education information including statistics, government reports, published studies and articles from virtually all journals.

The report also urges the establishment of "new partnerships," including the welcoming of "adjunct clearinghouses" to join the ERIC network. These adjuncts may receive some seed money to support the

start-up phase of their operations but should not expect long-term funding. The exact impact, both positive and negative, of these recommendations on the prospects for creating and maintaining an information resource center for archives and records is unclear. At the very least the changes in ERIC should be monitored closely to determine if the possibility exists for obtaining some start-up funding or continued fiscal and intellectual support from the ERIC system.[5]

Association of Research Libraries, Office of Management Services, Systems and Procedures Exchange Center (SPEC)

The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) is a membership organization of 118 major research libraries in the United States. It established the Office of Management Studies (OMS) in 1970 to help research libraries improve their management and service capabilities. Several archivists, having seen the real benefits that the OMS has provided to administrators of research libraries, have promoted the creation of an "archival management institute" modeled on OMS. In addition to the information services described below, OMS also coordinates management training programs and self-study projects for its member institutions.

OMS operates a Systems and Procedures Exchange Center (SPEC) that attempts to (1) collect information and documents on current practices in specific areas of library management and operations, (2) provide the original documents and the Center's analyses to the library community in a timely manner, (3) publish analytical state-of-the-art reviews on management topics, (4) identify library management expertise and facilitate its exchange, and (5) promote experimentation and innovation on the basis of what has succeeded elsewhere. As described later in this report, all of these were identified as desirable but largely unavailable services within the records community.

The central focus of their work is the production of "SPEC kits," which collect statistics and illustrative documents from member libraries on specific topics related to academic library operations, problems, and approaches. Recent issues have been devoted to such topics as photocopy services, cooperative collection development, and preservation education. They are issued 10 times per year and are available on a subscription basis (there are currently some 400 subscribers) or individually to ARL members and nonmembers alike. The kits are now compiled by individual librarians in the field who have a particular knowledge of the subject matter, although until recently they were mostly prepared by the SPEC staff.

The SPEC staff consists of one full-time information specialist and a part-time assistant. In addition to coordinating and producing the kits, the staff fields questions (about two per day) from members, using the background files for the kits as a subject-based reference file from which they can photocopy selected documents or send the entire kit in response.

The staff also conducts on-demand statistical surveys for ARL members, usually using simple one-page forms that can be completed and tabulated quickly. They claim that these surveys are easy and cheap to do and provide satisfactory results. They charge the requesting institution a small fee (about $200); this covers at most the postage and printing costs, but the staff can use the data to answer the requestor's specific question and then later add them to a data base of statistics on research libraries that they are building in-house. The results of individual surveys can be combined, manipulated to answer other questions, and repackaged for future SPEC kits.

Financially, the SPEC program and services are largely self-supporting. They get some base of support from ARL membership dues, although even that was minimal until the last couple of years. They also seek occasional grant funds to perform special surveys or research on a larger scale than their routine program permits. But most of their support comes from the sales of the kits which amounts to about $100,000/year. They are currently involved in a major effort to increase the subscription base and among other things are making the kits available for the first time through library vendors such as Faxon.

The SPEC model is encouraging as a model for an archives and records information center for two reasons: (1) a useful and active information program is possible with a staff of only 1.5 FTEs, and (2) such a program can become largely self-sustaining. But it also carries some problems that might make it difficult to transfer this kind of operation to the archives and records field.

One key to the SPEC program's success is ARL's membership structure, not only guaranteeing a base of financial support through dues but also carrying an obligation to respond to requests for statistical and program information and documents. It is a two-way support mechanism. The SPEC staff knows it can get 118 major institutions to give it data quickly and accurately when asked; the institutions know they are going to get information and analyses back 10 times a year that will be useful in their day-to-day operations. ARL is a small organization that has established criteria for membership. Libraries which join are committed to participating

in all ARL programs including SPEC. Each institution designates a single SPEC liaison who is responsible for answering requests and surveys. This allows the SPEC staff to contact one individual for a response instead of merely sending requests to the institutions blindly. To make the same system work in the records field, perhaps 50 major archival institutions would have to pay some kind of basic fee to join and then cooperate in providing data and documents.

Another cautionary note must be sounded about the SPEC staff's apparent success in conducting statistical surveys and compiling a data base. They found the surveys to be relatively easy and cheap to execute while yielding satisfactory results. But the ARL universe is a small and homogeneous one of only 118 members that have largely similar missions and problems. The archives and records universe is much more diverse and therefore more likely to cause difficulty in collecting and interpreting meaningful statistics. There was certainly a consensus during this project that records practitioners need more reliable and extensive data about themselves, their work, and their institutions than they now have available, but the data may not be as easy for the records field to obtain as they apparently have been for ARL.

Museum Reference Center

The Museum Reference Center, operating in the Smithsonian Institution Libraries since 1974, provides central library, information, and bibliographic services for museum professionals and researchers both within the Smithsonian and worldwide. It focuses on the work and products of museums, galleries, historical societies, science and technology centers, zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, planetariums, outdoor parks, and historical sites in the U.S. and around the world.

The Museum Reference Center houses more than 1400 books and 800 serials relating to the history, philosophy, and operation of museums. Some 90 linear feet of vertical files include brochures, events schedules, and other descriptive items from over 1800 museums in the United States, associations for museum professionals, and foreign museums. They also include extensive subject files that contain largely unpublished items such as plans and feasibility studies for new museums, financing and budgets, staffing and personnel management, community relations, and the like.[6]

The collecting strategy of the Museum Reference Center tends to be a more passive one than that of the Association of Research Libraries's SPEC program described above. When material is received, it is filed in the appropriate category but less emphasis is placed on actively seeking out all relevant material on a specific subject. Because the Center operates as part of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries, it can draw on the rest of the libraries' resources, including the catalog of the libraries' collections and data base search capabilities.

The Museum Reference Center could provide a unique and valuable resource for any archivist working in a museum or with a combination of manuscript and artifact collections. It might also provide a model for modest improvements in information services for the records field. Many of the services it provides to museum professionals are already available to archivists and records administrators through the NARA library, although records practitioners and perhaps even the library staff might not recognize them as such. Certainly the NARA library already holds the core of an equivalent vertical file collection although its development has not been as comprehensive or systematic as the Museum Reference Center's effort. For instance, NARA has made no attempt to gather repository annual reports each year as the Reference Center has done for all U.S. museums. The NARA library does contain a thorough collection of professional books and serials, probably the most comprehensive archives- and records-related collection anywhere. The archives and records community could benefit from even a modest growth in the collection development and outreach efforts of the NARA library using the Museum Reference Center as an example.

V. PLANNING FOR AN ARCHIVES AND RECORDS INFORMATION CENTER

Benefits Records Practitioners Expect From an Information Center

The limitations of existing information resources about recordskeeping practices and techniques have led many to propose the establishment of a single, centralized source for information, usually in the form of a "clearinghouse." But they have done so with only a loose definition of the term "clearinghouse" in mind and only a vague understanding of the functions and services such an operation might encompass.

In fact, the term "clearinghouse," its relative "information resource center," and all variants in between are difficult to define precisely because their functions have been changing continuously since such organizations first began to appear in the 1950s.[7] They range from very limited operations that collect, index, store, and reproduce printed documents to much more interactive environments that synthesize documents and data and emphasize networking activities. One report illustrated the diversity of their possible roles by describing their ability to adopt and adapt functions that have been performed traditionally by several more familiar types of organizations:

- libraries and information centers (in their provision of reference and referral services, including literature searches for requesters);
- special libraries (in their collection of materials in a narrowly defined area and in the preparation of bibliographies within that scope);
- secondary publishers (in their preparation of indexing/abstracting announcement tools in the form of printed publications and/or computer-readable data bases, for distribution to the public);
- research institutes (in their analysis of technical literature and preparation of reports synthesizing their findings); and
- primary publishers (in their creation, publication, and distribution of new, original literature, *e.g.*, handbooks, critical reviews, and summaries).[8]

Despite the lack of clarity over specific definitions, the records practitioners who participated in this project were quite clear about what improvements they expected to achieve through the establishment of a clearinghouse or information center. First, they wanted more systematic and comprehensive control over written information about recordskeeping practices and procedures regardless of source or format of the document. Second, they wanted to improve channels of nonwritten communication so that the substantial quantity of important and useful information that never reaches print could be located and shared.

Perhaps the most obvious deficiency in the existing array of information services is the inability to identify and easily obtain copies of all or even most printed documents on archives and records. The existing bibliographical data bases, including those serving the library and information field, cover only selected journals relevant to records and archival practice. Coverage of non-journal literature in any systematic way is nearly nonexistent. To fully meet this need would require the development of a bibliographical data base devoted to archives and records that would work in conjunction with a document collection, storage, and delivery system. These services often comprise the primary or sole motivations behind the creation of clearinghouses serving other fields.

Another equally important requirement that emerged during the project's discussions is the ability to evaluate and screen the array of available information in order to identify and deliver only those items that respond best to practitioners' needs. While some sectors of the records community complained of "information overload" and said that they were inundated with volumes of irrelevant material, others said that they had

great difficulty in locating reliable, basic information on recordskeeping practices and procedures.

Those experiencing overload tend to be experienced practitioners, especially program managers in larger institutions, who automatically have access to a larger pool of information than those who work in small operations or are new to the field. The availability of a large volume of information is a hindrance, not a help, if it is nonselective. Its sheer volume prevents it from being absorbed or used efficiently. It contains much useless data along with the few items of interest. By relying on habitual channels rather than continuously seeking out new sources, the practitioner may also miss something significant that appears somewhere other than in his or her usual sources. As one participant put it, "there is too much information but not enough communication."

The novice practitioner, or the individual who has only transient responsibilities for archives and records, requires a similar screening and selection process in order to obtain reliable, basic information easily and quickly. The information provided to a novice will be less sophisticated or technical, and perhaps less extensive, but requires a similar attempt at balancing selectivity and comprehensiveness as that provided the more experienced user.

The project's participants also expected a clearinghouse or information center to enable them to make better use of the experience gained by other practitioners in solving common problems. There is a common and unfortunate failure among records professionals to prepare formal articles detailing the progress or results of their work. What is committed to writing often exists only in internal documents or reports that have a very limited circulation and little publicity.

One frequently cited example is the lack of a systematic method for collecting and disseminating either the formal or informal written products resulting from projects funded by the NEH and the NHPRC. These agencies frequently support innovative projects in order to provide models or demonstrations that can be applied widely in the profession. Although the terms of the grants encourage distribution of the products and project reports, in practice dissemination has often been limited because resources for large-scale printing and distribution are lacking in both the project institutions and the granting agencies. The results of projects undertaken without NEH or NHPRC support are even less likely to be disseminated.

A clearinghouse would provide a focus for the desired exchange of techniques and practices by serving as an eager recipient of and logical source for any formal or informal products of local projects. Not only could it handle print and near-print written materials, but it could serve as a "switching point" in monitoring the existence of and providing sources of nonwritten information. The interactive relationship of supply and use is often the motivating force behind the creation of clearinghouses and information centers in any field.[9]

Determining the Philosophy and Functions of the Information Center

Outlined below are some of the basic decisions that archivists and records administrators must make in planning for the establishment of a clearinghouse or information resource center.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INFORMATION TO BE DISSEMINATED

Will the center merely inform its audience about the availability of information (*i.e.*, the fact that information exists and how to obtain it), or will it disseminate knowledge (*i.e.*, the information content itself)? The consensus developed during this project definitely leaned toward the latter choice. There was some initial interest in organizing a consortium of archives and records associations that would sponsor a central organization to serve as a directory to and coordinator for information services already in existence but that would not itself produce information. The project's information specialist, Molly Wolfe, advised strongly against this approach, observing that a center that serves merely as a switching point has nothing substantive to sustain its operations or audience.

WHAT TYPES OF INFORMATION WILL THE CENTER DISSEMINATE?

A strong consensus emerged during the project on the types of information products and services that would be of most use to archivists and other records administrators. The participants showed the most interest in (1) locating and exchanging internal administrative and technical documents, (2) gathering and manipulating statistical data on archives and records operations, and (3) improving bibliographical control over monographs and periodical literature.

The participants wanted the clearinghouse to provide certain specific products and services:

Copies of standards and models. One of the foundations of the ability to learn from the experiences of others is the ability to identify and share standards or, in the absence of standards, examples of widely accepted practice. This interest in a commonality of technique and methods reflects a grow-

ing effort within the archival profession as a whole to codify and regularize its practices, many of which until recently have been based on tradition and local habits rather than a universal, profession-wide standard. This category includes items that have been developed or endorsed by the profession as a whole (*e.g.*, the MARC format for the description of archives and manuscripts) and examples of local solutions that could be used as models outside their home institutions (*e.g.*, procedures manuals, sample disposition schedules, acquisition policy statements, privacy legislation).

Technical information and guidelines. Another area of keen interest was the evaluation and application of technology as it affects both the management of recordskeeping institutions and the nature of the records themselves. The rapidly expanding use of computers in the office and home requires decisions daily that are quite technical in nature. In addition, advances in micrographics and preservation techniques have broad implications for recordskeepers in all types of institutions and agencies.

Management data and statistics. Anyone attempting to do any analytical work on the archives and records field quickly discovers how little hard data there are about the people who perform the work, the institutions they work for, and the records they preserve. The AASLH completed a dual project in 1984 that collected data on historical institutions and the composition and salaries of their staffs.[10] The SAA distributed an institutional census form in 1986 and has recently finished the initial collation and interpretion of the data it collected. These are positive steps in the right direction, but will by no means completely fill this significant information gap. Managers of archival programs in particular have expressed a need for comparative data on such topics as salary rates, staffing patterns, and reference activity that they could use in preparing annual budgets and work plans.

Bibliographic control of archives and records literature. There was great interest in the creation of a bibliographic data base that would index and abstract articles from the professional journals as well as capture monographs and other printed materials. Archives and records literature is not covered well in any of the existing commercial data bases and the profession has generally had to rely on the printed bibliographies compiled by the NARA library which are quite dated by the time they appear. The participants acknowledged that an automated data base would be an expensive and time-consuming project and would be difficult to sustain within the projected budgetary limitations any archives and records information center might have. But they were reluctant to give up hope for its creation because of the valuable service it would provide. Fortunately, the NARA library staff is now exploring the creation of an automated bibliography that may answer this need (see Appendix A).

Directory service and referrals. This is the classic "switching point," listing the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of individuals and organizations providing specific services, products, or equipment. Specifically, there was interest in lists of consultants, a peer directory of experts on selected topics (*e.g.*, security, preservation), and lists of vendors of specific products (*e.g.*, storage containers, software, preservation supplies) or services (*e.g.*, encapsulation, binding).

Advocacy and explanatory materials. These kinds of documents, produced by a variety of archives and records organizations, may include basic definitions (*e.g.*, SAA glossary), descriptions of program elements (*e.g.*, NAGARA's principles for state and local government records programs), and materials used to convince others of the value of sound records programs (*e.g.*, NICLOG audiovisual materials).

These information products and services are all targeted at the keepers, not the users, of the records. One of the first categories eliminated from the potential information center's responsibilities was the description of archival holdings. Several other nationwide sources for this information are emerging, including library networks like RLIN and OCLC and the Chadwyck-Healey microfiche publication of finding aids.

NEUTRALITY VERSUS ADVOCACY IN THE INFORMATION DISSEMINATED

Will the center develop and distribute materials advocating only one point of view or will it distribute materials from all sides of an issue? The project's information specialist pointed out that the more activist a center becomes the more difficult it is to sustain because of political pressures. While this question was raised during the conferences, no consensus was reached on how a center should approach this issue. Some participants were concerned that a nonjudgmental operating philosophy could prompt the distribution of useless and even potentially harmful information to individuals with insufficient skills or experience to judge them accordingly. Others were concerned that an overly selective center

could become unfairly prejudiced against a particular form of practice or could continue to endorse an out-of-date technique simply because it was familiar. The difficulty in coming to terms with how selective or evaluative the center's staff should be may well reflect the current struggle in the archival field to develop standards of practice in a number of areas. Until practitioners agree on what the standards should be they will probably continue to be nervous about a single individual passing judgment on what constitutes a good or bad example of any specific product or technique.

DEGREE OF AGGRESSIVENESS USED IN DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

Will the center be active and aggressive in its distribution of information or will it be content with a more passive and responsive approach? In choosing the degree of aggressiveness, will it

- distribute information only on request (*i.e.*, wait for the phone to ring)?
- distribute to those who subscribe or otherwise request to receive certain kinds of information or products automatically (*e.g.*, newsletters, bulletins)?
- distribute to selected individuals and organizations in a target population without any prior knowledge that they are interested in being recipients (*i.e.*, blanket mailings)?

The participants generally preferred a moderately aggressive approach in both the acquisition and dissemination of information. They were interested in having the staff identify areas of need and develop products targeted to fill them rather than merely waiting for the telephone to ring with a question.

Several factors serve to favor an active approach. One is the large number of people who accept or are assigned recordskeeping responsibilities with little or no prior training or experience in the field. These individuals, often working in professions other than archives and records management (*e.g.*, librarians, county recorders and clerks), need a highly visible source from which to obtain basic information and referrals for assistance. There is some reluctance among professional archivists to distribute information or advice on how to care for records to just anyone. Obviously, in an ideal world, every important record of long-term value would be cared for by someone who has the specialized training and experience needed to perform the work properly. But most agree that budget constraints and other factors will always serve to place some portion of the nation's documents in the hands of nonprofessionals. Just as lay people are trained in first aid to keep the injured alive until the doctor arrives, records professionals have an obligation to provide enough basic information to nonprofessionals so that they can adequately oversee the preservation and use of records in their care.

Another important role that a center could play is in informing those outside the field about the importance and substance of the work of the records community. As the SAA's Task Force on Archives and Society has found, the public at large and the "resource providers" who supply the funds to perform the work often have little understanding of or appreciation of the responsibilities of archivists and records administrators. While most of the interest lay in developing products and services for records practitioners themselves, the center could also provide the means for educating both the public at large and institutional administrators by creating products specifically designed for that purpose.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TARGET AUDIENCE

In order to perform its functions effectively, an information center must have a clear understanding of the audience it is supposed to serve. The potential audience for an archives and records information resource center consists primarily of the four sectors of the records community described in section II above. As noted there, the strongest interest in the establishment of a clearinghouse, and hence the most likely sources of support for its activities and operations, has come from professional archivists and local government officials. As a practical matter, the clearinghouse should concentrate its efforts where the greatest need and interest lie.

Some participants in the project strongly believed that a marketing study is necessary as a first step in order to establish actual needs, current patterns of information seeking, and willingness to pay for services. Others believed that the needs are already generally apparent and that only development and testing through experience can determine actual demand and volume of interest and traffic. In the minds of the latter group, the best indicator of what the audience wants will be its use and purchase of specific services once the center is operating.

One study of clearinghouse operations underscored the importance of understanding whether some individuals become part of the audience only under special conditions or when confronted with a particular problem. This would apply to local government officials and others who inherit significant records responsibilities when they are elected but whose average tenure is often less than four years in office. Others with sudden or short-

term needs for information might include a facilities manager ordered to clean out a warehouse or an executive appointed to an administrative position that oversees an archival operation. These individuals will require very basic tools, and a continuing effort to locate and educate such new entrants to the field will be needed.

Another important consideration is whether the target audience can be reached directly or whether it is necessary or desirable to reach its members through a set of intermediaries. Most of the individuals and institutions comprising the sector of professional archivists and records administrators can be reached directly, although the center will depend heavily on the several professional associations as suppliers of information and may in turn choose to disseminate some information through them. For those individuals for whom recordskeeping is only one of many responsibilities—librarians, local government officials, administrators—it may be easier and more efficient to reach them through other organizations serving as intermediaries. As an example, both the National League of Cities and the International City Managers Association operate their own extensive information centers and receive regular requests for information about records management and archives operations. They are unwilling to respond to such requests by merely providing a name and telephone number for the user to call; their members expect and demand substantive answers to their questions. The archives and records information center could, however, prepare appropriate materials for such information centers to distribute and the managers of these services were quite eager to receive such materials for distribution. They could summarize key points on such topics as proper storage conditions, security programs, and basic archival services, and then provide a "for further information" section with names and addresses of trained records practitioners, associations, or institutions that can provide additional assistance.

Financial Planning and Cost Recovery[11]

Because information centers involve such labor intensive work, the size of the budget usually correlates most closely to the size of the staff. In one study, user services, the activities associated with responding to individual requests for reference service or referrals, whether by mail or telephone, were the most labor intensive and accounted for a mean of 24 percent of all operating costs. Publications programs consumed a total mean of 32 percent (15 percent for publications development, 14 percent for printing, and 3 percent for mailing).

Information centers that attempt to recover some or all of their operating costs collect fees in three ways:

- fee-for-service based on the level of effort required to produce the information, with the fee paid after service is provided,
- flat rate established in advance for a specific type of service, paid for before or after receipt of service, or
- a subscription fee, paid in advance, to establish eligibility or to cover up to a certain level of service.

The costs of making the transaction must be considered when calculating cost recovery fees. Transaction costs include those incurred by the information center in billing and accounting as well as those incurred by the recipient in ordering and paying for the services. Subscription and prepayment plans generally have lower transaction costs than those associated with the fee-for-service approach which requires separate calculations for each order.

It is possible to recover costs more easily for some kinds of activities than for others. The directors of several clearinghouses interviewed for one study believed that they could recover printing costs, but not the development costs, for synthesis and analysis publications. The costs of establishing data bases are also very difficult to recover. The directors considered it impractical to charge fees for most question-answering and referral services that involve minimal research time because the transaction costs exceed any revenue generated. It is also difficult to charge for pamphlets, brochures, and short bibliographies because they serve both public relations and information functions. Charges are most common for monographs, non-print media, and computerized searches. Most centers distributed newsletters and advertising brochures and made referrals to other services free of charge. It is interesting to note that a General Accounting Office study found that federal information centers recover only about 15 percent of costs associated with user services.

Characteristics of a Successful Information Resource Center

On the basis of the needs expressed by archivists and other records administrators during the course of our study, the analysis of successful information programs serving other professions, studies of information centers that have appeared in the professional literature, and guidance provided by the project's information specialist, several elements have been identified that must

be present to ensure a successful archives and records information resource center.

Experienced and motivated personnel. The staff must include at least one experienced archivist well versed in a broad range of programs and activities. If the center under consideration were going to function primarily as a documentation center, the records-related experience would be less important because the process of abstracting and indexing generally does not require much substantive knowledge of a field. But the products and services desired most strongly by the records practitioners who participated in this project will require substantive knowledge that can be provided only by a professional with broad experience in the field and extensive personal contacts.

Effective information gathering mechanisms. Individual staff members will have to be aggressive in seeking out information. Depending on the nature of the center's parent organization, contributions of materials could also be encouraged by invoking a membership obligation, as exists in the Association of Research Libraries' support of SPEC, or may be enhanced if the parent is a natural focus of professional activity and interest such as NARA or SAA.

Single, centralized operation for dissemination. Users must have a single telephone number or address from which to request information. The center should be able to give substantive responses to most questions.

An active rather than reactive approach. The staff should anticipate questions and needs instead of waiting for the telephone to ring. They should develop product lines (*e.g.*, documentation and data kits, directories) that have broad utility and can provide answers to recurring questions quickly and cheaply.

Tiered delivery of services. The center must be able to respond to the widely varying needs and resources of small to large institutions, novice to experienced practitioners. The quantity of service may be based on the amount paid (*e.g.*, comprehensive membership for the full range of services, annual subscriptions for all issues of specific products, individual purchases of single documents). The sophistication and detail of the products must be geared to its clients' varying levels of experience and size of program.

Realistic expectations and limits on scope and quantity of service. The center will take a minimum of three years to be fully established and effective. Especially at the beginning, it must concentrate on doing a few things well. It may also mean concentrating at first on the primary audience of professional archivists with the expectation that what helps archivists will also help records managers, allied professionals, and local government officials.

Self-supporting budget. Declining federal domestic appropriations and ongoing limitations in the budgets of professional associations make it unlikely that a parent organization could be found that would be able to subsidize fully the operations of an archives and records resource center. Most grant funds are provided only when the grantee can demonstrate the ability to establish a continuing source of financial support. Except for start-up costs and perhaps a minimal amount of administrative support, therefore, the center will probably have to be self-supporting. Fortunately the information needs identified above are also the most likely to be marketable and therefore pay for themselves through membership or subscription fees.

OPTIONS

for Improving Information Services for the Records Community

STRUCTURAL AND SERVICE OPTIONS

Described below are three proposed models for an archives and records information resource center. The choices include: (1) using existing resources more effectively through a concerted and coordinated effort among the current providers (Option A); (2) creating a new entity as a focus for a modest effort at improving and centralizing information activities in the records community (Option B); or (3) undertaking an aggressive and ambitious project to establish a full-service information center on archives and records (Option C).

These structural and service options are presented separately from the options for placement, *i.e.*, the selection of a parent agency to house the information center. While the choices relating to structure and services and the choice of a parent agency are clearly interdependent; the factors involved in selecting the latter are so complicated in themselves that a separate discussion is required. The section describing placement options follows on pages 26-28.

STRUCTURAL & SERVICE OPTION A:

Enhance Existing Information Resources to Deliver More Comprehensive and Coordinated Service

CHARACTERISTICS

- Coordinates work among current information providers
- Encourages participation in underused systems such as ERIC

OPERATIONS

It is possible that existing resources could be enhanced and better utilized to improve information services for archivists and records administrators.

By their very nature professional associations such as SAA, NAGARA, ARMA, AASLH, ALA, SLA, and AIIM serve as information clearinghouses for the individuals who belong to them. They produce journals and newsletters that are the central dissemination vehicles for written materials; their staffs have daily contact with members of the profession nationwide and thus are usually the best informed about recent developments or new projects. Several programs already operating in these associations could become key components of a potential archives and records information center, including the SAA Problems in Archives Kits and the AASLH Technical Information Service among others.

In addition, federal agencies such as NARA, LC, NHPRC, and NEH have an obligation and interest in keeping their varied constituents informed of their work and findings. Evidence of successful innovations that practitioners in the field can apply locally will lead to active support and a willingness to lobby Congress and the White House for continued or increased federal appropriations.

Archivists and records administrators also should take better advantage of other resources that they are not now using effectively. The most obvious of these is ERIC which could provide valuable document abstracting, indexing, and delivery services with virtually no additional costs beyond the minimal reproduction charges made for fulfilling individual requests. ERIC also offers exposure of records-related materials to practitioners in allied fields who might not otherwise be aware of them.

The profession should also consider preparing general materials for distribution through information centers within associations serving other professional and occupational groups such as the National League of Cities and the International City Management Association. Managers of these information centers have indicated that they would welcome direction on the choice of appropriate existing materials as well as the development of new documents specifically tailored for their users.

OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

To use these existing mechanisms to solve the identified information-sharing problems would require a coordination of effort and unity of concern among the associations and institutions that comprise the pool of primary information providers. At least three specific actions would be required:

(1) The formation of a central coordinating and mediating committee to establish priorities, assign responsibility for specific products and services, and define boundaries of coverage to avoid unnecessary duplication where possible. This would entail the acceptance by each organization of a degree of control and direction from outside that they do not now acknowledge.

(2) The designation of a single individual in each organization to serve as coordinator and monitor, preferably someone on the paid staff of that organization who could be held accountable for the performance of these activities.

(3) The commitment of significant financial support and personnel to support the larger information interchange system.

DRAWBACKS

While no one would deny the desirability of having the professional associations and major national institutions work more closely on information exchange or any other goal, it is unlikely that such an approach alone would substantially improve the information problems now faced. The large number of organizations and diversity of their constituencies would make the formation of a single set of priorities and approaches extremely difficult. From the user's standpoint, the diffusion of services among 15 to 20 separate providers would be confusing at best and discouraging at worst. It might be logical to recommend that the three or four central organizations should strengthen their individual information programs and support a coordinated effort among them to obtain outside funding toward this end. But over the long term, a formal network and exchange mechanisms would require a level of committment and energy that would be difficult or impossible to sustain.

FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

Many of the costs inherent in this option would be to some extent hidden in the operating budgets of the cooperating organizations. Some straightforward funding, which could perhaps be obtained through grant support, would be necessary for starting and maintaining the coordinating body. But most of the costs would come by way of redirecting staff time and other resources within each organization to the coordinated information effort. Without clear segmentation of the information function, the staff liaison within each organization could easily be drawn off onto other more immediately demanding projects.

STRUCTURAL & SERVICE OPTION B:

Establish a Modest Self-Supporting Archives and Records Information Center

CHARACTERISTICS

- Operation based on institutional membership with the eventual goal of full cost recovery
- Emphasis on collation and pass-through with little analysis
- Active product development to identify and meet users' needs

OPERATIONS

This option would establish a modest information center designed to be largely self-supporting within three

years (see projected budget in Appendix B). It is heavily modeled on the successful Systems and Procedures Exchange Center (SPEC) program now operating in the Association of Research Libraries' Office of Management Studies. It also contains elements of the Problems in Archives Kit (PAK) program operated by the SAA office and the Technical Information Service provided by AASLH.

The full range of services offered would be available to those institutions or organizations that become members of the center. Cost of membership could be based on the institution's ability to pay, scaled according to size of annual budget, number of staff positions dedicated to archives and records responsibilities, or some similar measure. Nonmembers, including individuals, could obtain annual subscriptions to individual product lines or could purchase single issues. The quantity and cost of service thus would be tiered to meet the needs and financial resources of a variety of archives and records institutions as well as individual practitioners. While memberships would be available from the beginning, a full membership drive would probably not occur until well into the second year of operation after the line of products is well established and potential members can easily see the benefits of paying up front for the full range of services.

The working relationship of this type of membership organization with existing professional associations would have to be negotiated. The associations are likely to be among the principal developers and suppliers of certain kinds of publications and other products that the center will want to distribute. In turn, the associations are likely to want to distribute products developed by the center to their members. Blanket agreements allowing associations to distribute all of the center's products would undermine the necessary membership base of the center. More practical would be the development by the center of certain products serving advocacy or promotional functions that could be distributed widely free of charge. Other products of the center would be available to associations at cost. Similarly, the center would purchase association products at cost for its own distribution.

PRINCIPAL PRODUCTS & SERVICES

(1) *Topical collections of documents* modeled on ARL SPEC kits or SAA PAKs. 10 kits per year, 60-100 pp. each, with initial press runs of 400. Topics would be selected by the staff based on recommendations from the associations and other representatives of the records community.

(2) *Bimonthly newsletter* provided to members and by individual subscription, with additional limited distribution free of charge for promotional and networking purposes. The newsletter would summarize current projects underway in the resource center, highlight new products and services, request assistance on specific topics, and provide observations on areas of greatest interest among the center's constituents.

(3) *Statistical collection and manipulation,* especially short, on-demand, fee-for-service statistical and informational surveys of selected repositories or recordskeepers as requested by members. Statistics gathering can become enormously expensive and complicated, but the emphasis here would be on simple collections of numbers on narrowly defined topics. If it appears practical over time, the center could consider developing a unified statistical data base, perhaps incorporating data collected during SAA's institutional census and AASLH's surveys as well as its own data gathering projects.

(4) *Directory of Archival Information Sources.* Molly Wolfe pointed out that compiling a directory was an excellent way to "get your arms around a field," especially when creating a new information center. The staff would probably compile lists of information sources and providers of services in the course of performing its work anyway. The goal would be to formalize this process sufficiently to allow a printed directory to be compiled and issued within the first 12 to 18 months of operation.

(5) *Annual listings of significant projects* undertaken with grant funds from NHPRC, NEH, and Title IIC, as well as those conducted by major institutions such as NARA, LC, the Public Archives of Canada, and the Northeast Document Conservation Center. The lists could be printed primarily for distribution by professional associations either through their newsletters, which already carry notices that grants were awarded in many cases, or during annual meetings. Projects would be categorized by technique, medium, or product (*e.g.*, encapsulation, machine-readable records, finding aids). Brief synopses of both work in progress and final results would be included. The availability of reports and other products would be noted, especially when they can be obtained through the information center.

(6) *Reference and referral service* providing answers to telephone and mail inquiries based largely on documents and data collected for the topical collections. As all archivists know, reference services can be extremely costly and time consuming. The center may be forced to limit these services to members only or may restrict them to a certain number of queries per month according to membership category. Many participants hoped that a toll-free, "800 number" could become one of the clearinghouse's services. Unfortunately, making the staff so easily accessible could tie up all their time on reference and prevent them from completing other tasks.

Experience with actual operations will tell more about whether a toll-free number is indeed practical.

(7) *Limited reference book and vertical file collection* beyond those documents collected specifically for one of the kits, open for nonstaff use by appointment only. No effort will be made to create a comprehensive library of archives and records publications; instead, staff will rely on resources already available in the NARA library, the NHPRC collection of finding aids, and elsewhere (assuming a Washington-based center).

(8) *Electronic mail and data-base access* through one of the commercial utilities. ALANET, a service offered through the American Library Association, may be a good choice for several reasons. Its primary clients are libraries and other information organizations and it therefore has been tailored to serve an audience with similar needs and concerns to those of archivists and records administrators. It is also relatively inexpensive. Use for data base searches would have to be judicious and probably could not be provided as a regular part of member services. Rather, the on-line access would primarily serve the center's staff in keeping them up to date with recent literature and research.

STRUCTURAL & SERVICE OPTION C:

Develop a Full-Service Information Collection and Delivery Operation for Archivists and Records Administrators

CHARACTERISTICS

- Comprehensive services to meet the information needs of all records practitioners
- Mix of self-supporting and subsidized services
- Significant level of analysis and synthesis in research and product development

OPERATIONS

In addition to those self-supporting services offered in Option B, a full-service information center would provide several more that would be valuable but deliver little or no direct monetary return. Thus a full-service operation would require the securing of a long-term, continuing source of support, probably through a diversion of funds within its parent organization (appropriations in a federal agency such as NARA or general membership dues in an organization such as SAA) or less likely through a commitment for several years of support from a private foundation such as Mellon.

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES
(in addition to those described under Option B)

(1) *A searchable automated data base* of literature related to archives and records that would include abstracts of articles and books. There was nearly universal agreement that a data base of bibliographical citations without accompanying abstracts is at best frustrating and at worst useless. Too much time is lost pursuing articles whose titles sound promising but actually have little or no relationship to the research topic. Conversely, significant articles are frequently overlooked because titles alone give insufficient information about the contents of the text.

(2) *A quarterly abstract publication* containing the entries made in the data base during the period. This would be useful as a regular method of reviewing recent literature, especially for those practitioners who have broad responsibilities and little research time such as program managers.

(3) *A comprehensive reference collection* that would be routinely open for use by archivists, records managers, and others interested in the field. The expense of establishing and maintaining both the data base and reference collection could be relatively modest if the parent organization were the National Archives. The core of each already exists in the NARA library and would need merely to be enhanced. But the development and housing of such a comprehensive collection outside NARA would be enormously expensive in terms of purchasing, storing, and cataloging the required materials.

(4) *A thorough statistics gathering, manipulation, and interpretation system.* Rather than start with a patchwork of quick, narrowly focused statistical surveys as described in Option B, the full-service operation would employ from the start the necessary personnel and methodologies to ensure that it could gather comprehensive and valid statistics on a wide range of topics.

(5) *Analytical and evaluative services.* While Option B emphasized the dissemination of existing materials with little interpretation by the staff of the validity or utility of their contents, a full-service operation should be able to provide more in-depth assistance both in assessing the value of existing materials, products, and services and in preparing its own materials to fill otherwise unmet needs. This aspect of its operation could include an archival *Consumer Reports*, *i.e.*, a mechanism that would evaluate commercial products and services for use in archives and records operations and report the results of its tests. The enhancement of this service would make this more nearly a full research institute rather than a mere information service center.

(6) *On-demand production of topical products* specifically geared to concerns or themes of professional association meetings. These could include bibliographies on workshop topics, data base searches on core session subjects, or statistical summaries.

(7) *Toll free "hot line"* ("800 number") that users can call during business hours with reference questions. Presumably the full service operation would have the resources necessary to staff a reference line adequately without undermining other activities, a real concern in Option B.

(8) *Searches of national data bases* to respond, on-demand, to member's inquiries. Use of the data bases would also support research projects undertaken by the staff.

PLACEMENT OPTIONS

The choice of a parent agency for an archives and records information center is a critical but complicated one. Placement of the center must be based on a variety of financial, political, logistical, and operational considerations all of which will affect how well it serves the records community. As stated above, the placement of the center will affect the choices made about its structure and services; it is important, therefore, that the discussion in this section be considered in conjunction with those choices put forward under the three options described in the preceding section.

National Archives and Records Administration

The participants in the May and June conferences reached a consensus quite easily that the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) was the logical and most desirable home for an archives and records information center. After reviewing the draft of this report, the Acting Archivist of the United States wrote a letter to the NAGARA Executive Director expressing NARA's interest in assuming "a greater leadership role in the world of archives, records management and information resources." In that letter and subsequent discussions, he hoped that the possibility of placing the clearinghouse in the National Archives could be explored further. He correctly noted that special attention would have to be given to determining the level of additional resources necessary to accomplish this goal and to developing funding strategies that could tap potentially new sources both inside and outside of government.

The advantages of a NARA placement include

- NARA's natural position of leadership and high visibility within the records community and its accompanying obligation to provide assistance;
- NARA's considerable resources, including a sizable staff, extensive library, active research program, and concentration of technical expertise; and
- the revolving National Archives Trust Fund, the use of which would allow receipts from an information center's sales to be used for its continued operations rather than merely being conveyed directly to the U.S. Treasury as most federal receipts are.

Of the several organizational possibilities within NARA, most felt that the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) was probably the most appropriate. NHPRC was favored because

- it already works daily with and understands the problems of practitioners from a broad range of repositories, government agencies, and other public and private institutions nationwide;
- NHPRC's statutory authority is independent of that governing the National Archives itself and may provide more administrative flexibility;
- it has already become an informal information center with staff members developing areas of expertise in the course of their work with grantees;
- the development of the Directory of Archives and Manuscript Repositories has left NHPRC with a data base of basic information about repositories in the U.S.; and
- the commission can hire staff directly, eliminating potential difficulties in obtaining persons with the necessary background and experience that might be encountered in working through the federal personnel system.

It is possible that NHPRC was most frequently cited also because it is the most familiar to those working outside of NARA.

Several other administratively sound options also exist within the National Archives: the NARA library which, as described elsewhere, already administers a large research collection of print and near-print literature on archives and records; the new Records Administration Information Center which is actively supplying similar services; and the Research and Evaluation Staff which generates a significant amount of innovative research of interest to records professionals.

NARA administrators indicated during the course of the project that some limited reallocation of funds and staff positions could be made to accommodate an information center within the agency. It must be noted, however, that these comments were made before the

Gramm-Rudman-Hollings appropriations bill, which is forcing NARA to reduce its budget, passed in the winter of 1985-86. The long-term effects of this measure are currently unknown, but the existing economic climate in the federal government is not very encouraging for new undertakings.

While placement of an archives and records information center in the National Archives is an obvious and well-founded choice for many reasons, there are also a few factors requiring consideration that might prevent the center from operating in a manner that is both economical and fully responsive to the needs of the records community. Some of these drawbacks result from the tremendous differences in staff size and operating budget between NARA and every other archival repository in the United States. Both NARA as an institution and its individual staff members have had a consistently difficult time understanding and responding to the needs of the rest of the archival community whose programs operate on a much smaller scale. Other difficulties stem from an inherent lack of flexibility and efficiency in the federal government.

Specific factors that present difficulties for a NARA placement include

- the continued lack of a permanent appointment to the position of Archivist of the U.S.;
- the overhead expenses in administering the NA Trust Fund that result in exceptionally high photocopying charges (30-35 cents per page) and would lead to higher user fees than those an independent or private center would have to charge to recover costs;
- federal personnel policies that might place undesirable conditions on job descriptions and credentials for the center's staff and on allowable rates of compensation;
- the proposed establishment of a new federal clearinghouse at a time when many others are closing would make the concept difficult to sell to those allocating federal funds and might invite unwelcome scrutiny of NARA's overall budget or programs; and
- a tiered membership structure as described in Structural and Service Option B above might prove difficult to administer through a public agency that seeks in every other circumstance to provide equal access and service to all users.

Society of American Archivists

Representatives of the Society of American Archivists who attended the May 1985 conference expressed no interest in developing and operating an archives and records information center within that organization, primarily because the scope of activity that was envisioned was too extensive and expensive to be incorporated into existing programs. As a result, the participants in the conference spent relatively little time exploring the pros and cons of such a placement. When the possibility arose later of developing a more modest and self-supporting operation along the lines of that described in Option B above, the then incumbent executive director was much more interested in considering SAA as a home for the center. Like NARA, SAA is undergoing a major change in leadership with a new executive director having taken office in September 1986. The new executive director has not had sufficient time nor experience with the organization to evaluate the effects or desirability of such a commitment. The SAA staff and council will have to give more consideration to the pros and cons of SAA providing a home for the center and, perhaps equally important, to the effects on the Society of a center being established elsewhere.

Some factors in favor of an SAA placement include:

- the ability to operate more cheaply and therefore provide services at lower cost than a center operating through the National Archives Trust Fund;
- the existence of the seeds of many of the desired products and services already in the SAA program; and
- an ongoing interest in serving the community of archivists and records administrators, a natural component of a professional association's activities.

There are likewise several factors that serve to argue against placing an archives and records information center in SAA:

- SAA is composed of one primary potential audience, archivists, but it may be more difficult for it to understand and serve the needs of the broader range of records managers, other allied professionals, and government officials;
- these other groups will probably be reluctant to ask for assistance from an organization that they perceive as serving another profession;
- the relatively modest SAA budget would be unable to absorb cost overruns, so that any misjudgments in the center's operations could provoke a precarious financial situation for the society; and
- a Chicago-based operation would leave the center far from essential resources in NARA and from other Washington-based providers.

Independent or Private Contractor

A third choice, one that combines several of the best elements of the two options above while eliminating some of the worst, would be for a federal agency, presumably NARA through NHPRC, to contract with a private entity to operate an information center that would be physically housed in or near the National Archives building. The contract would be "at no cost to the government" beyond the somewhat hidden costs of administering the contract, thus allowing the contractor to set and collect fees at a level necessary to recover its costs. The SAA might even choose to be the contractor. Many other federal agencies have chosen this form of operation. Advantages include

- proximity to NARA resources as well as those of other Washington-based information providers, such as LC, ERIC, NTIS, ARL-OMS, and NCLIS;
- flexibility in financial controls, allowing for lower user charges and the real possibility that a membership structure could be developed; and
- staff who are employees of the contractor, not federal employees, so that their salaries and qualifications could be determined independently of federal personnel regulations.

SAA would have an added advantage if it provides these services under contract. It could establish a Washington office for the Society, with the NARA-based information center as a major activity, thereby enabling it to extend its advocacy and interprofessional activities beyond its Chicago home. Of course federal funds, obtained either through appropriations or grants, could never be used for lobbying purposes, making this solution a very difficult and delicate one to negotiate to avoid the appearance of impropriety.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Establish a Modest Archives and Records Resource Center as Described in Option B.

In an ideal world with unlimited funds, the records community would no doubt benefit most from the full-service operation described under Option C above. Simply put, the records community does not now have and is unlikely to find the financial resources to undertake such an ambitious project. But the realities of shrinking government funds and already stretched association budgets should not rob us of our determination to make significant improvements in the availability and delivery of information to records practitioners. While Option A, calling only for the enhancement of existing services, might require smaller outright expenditures of funds and energy than would the creation of a new information center, it lacks the focus to sustain itself over time and carries significant hidden costs that would appear incrementally in the budgets of participating associations and institutions. Therefore, the records community should draw together toward the goal of establishing a modest, self-supporting information center as described in Option B. The creation and operation of such a center is realistic and achievable even within the current climate of fiscal restraint. To inform further discussion of this option, a projected budget for a three-year start-up period appears in Appendix B.

The optimum choice for placement of the center is less clear. The feasibility of establishing an information center within the National Archives that is operated by a private contractor should be explored further because it would seem to combine the best of two worlds: the ability to utilize fully NARA's considerable material and intellectual assets with the administrative flexibility and economy of the private sector.

Establishment of an information center will require a cooperative effort among the major associations and institutions—with SAA, NAGARA, AASLH, ARMA, and NARA taking the lead—to determine its appropriate operating philosophy and placement and to seek the necessary funds to finance the start-up period. The NHPRC, as an arm of NARA and an experienced interlocutor among these professional groups, would be the logical coordinator of this effort. The local government associations should be encouraged to participate in the planning process so that the resulting archives and records information center can work effectively through them to meet the specific needs of their members. If regional archival associations and allied professional organizations, such as ALA and SLA, are also willing to lend their support and expertise, all the better.

The next steps necessary toward establishing the archives and records information center include (1) presentation of the concept of an archives and records resource center to the appropriate professional associations to obtain their endorsement and support for the operation itself and for securing the grant funds required to establish it; (2) formation of a working group of representatives from the interested associations and institutions to shape the actual operating philosophy, structure, and functions of the proposed center; (3) negotiations with potential parent organizations to determine the best placement; and (4) preparation of a grant proposal to fund the three-year start-up period.

NAGARA has agreed to sponsor a small, wrap-up conference for the project that will bring representatives of the most interested organizations and agencies together to discuss implementation of these recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Designate the NARA Library as the Official Depository Library for Archives- and Records-Related Material and Encourage and Support the Development of the NARA Bibliographic Data Base

The archives and records information center recommended above is necessarily a modest effort and will draw heavily on existing resources whenever it can to make its goals attainable. Such an independent information center could not afford to duplicate the collection and bibliographical control of archives- and records-related literature that already exists in the NARA library. Indeed, it would be a waste of money to try.

The records community should consider designating the NARA library as the "official" depository for printed material pertaining to archives and records in the U.S. if the library would agree to serve in that role. Although unrecognized and underutilized by most archivists, the NARA library has accumulated a sizable body of technical manuals, selected finding aids, monographs, and periodicals of interest to archives and records professionals. It is now developing plans to automate the production of its annual bibliography of archival literature, a process that could ultimately provide the automated bibliographical data base that so many practitioners would find useful.

The library has its own resource problems, is short of adequate staff, space, and funding, and it has therefore been understandably selective in its collection development. It has sought to serve the needs of only the National Archives staff, not of the profession as a whole; the two groups may share a number of common concerns, but they are not identical in their needs. The existing collection, while large, is by no means all inclusive and has some surprising omissions in the recent professional literature—the AASLH survey volumes, the *Wages of History* and *A Culture at Risk*, for instance. To ask the NARA library to broaden its mandate to serve the needs of the entire records community would significantly increase its requirements for staff support and funding. The records community could help somewhat by agreeing to deposit (instead of having the library purchase) copies of significant archives- and records-related publications with the library. The staff would still have a considerable increase in cataloging and service time to contend with, but at least the book-buying budget would not have to grow proportionally.

APPENDIX A

Selected Catalog of Information Sources for Archivists and Other Records Practitioners

A variety of specialized information sources are currently available for use by archivists and other records practitioners. Some are heavily used while the existence of others is not widely known. The sources listed below are provided (1) to ensure that those working in the field have the opportunity to make the best possible use of existing sources until an archival information center or some other program is instituted, and (2) to demonstrate the interest in improving information exchange by enumerating the several programs that have been started in the last two or three years. In addition, by describing those products and services that *are* available this catalog should also help identify weaknesses and gaps in the current information delivery system that must be addressed when developing a new program.

National Archives Library

Contact: Reference Librarian, Room 200, NARA, Washington, DC 20408. Telephone: 202-523-3286.

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) library is perhaps the single best collection of archival literature available anywhere. Developed primarily for use by the NARA staff, it is also open to the public but is sorely underused for research by records professionals not employed by the National Archives. Particularly useful and unique is its vertical file collection of finding aids, brochures, procedures and policy manuals, and other ephemera collected from all types of archival repositories throughout the U.S. and the world.

The NARA library has also traditionally assumed responsibility for preparing an annual bibliography of archival literature, which for many years was published in the *American Archivist*. A compendium covering the years 1979-82 was prepared and published by NARA library staff as a separate volume in 1985. Bibliographies for 1983 and 1984 appeared in the *American Archivist*. The library is now considering whether to automate the preparation of the bibliography. Although the project is still in the earliest stages of development and few firm decisions have been made about the scope of material to be included, retrieval capabilities, or access policies, this is truly an effort to be applauded and encouraged by everyone in the profession. Automation not only will relieve many internal administrative and clerical problems for the NARA library itself, but could eventually provide an on-line data base of archives- and records-related literature for use by everyone in the field.

Records Administration Information Center

Contact: Katherine Coram, RAIC, Office of Records Administration, NARA, Washington, DC 20408. Telephone: 202-724-1471.

The National Archives established the Records Administration Information Center in January 1986. It is intended primarily to serve records managers in federal agencies, although any federal employee or private business or citizen may request information from the center. Its areas of specialization include federal laws and regulations, the records management life cycle, management of special types of records (*e.g.*, electronic and audiovisual media, micrographics), training, and referrals to other sources of assistance or information, including other NARA offices, other federal agencies, and nongovernment organizations.

AASLH Technical Information Service

Contact: Patricia Hogan, Director, Technical Information Service, AASLH, 172 Second Avenue North, Suite 102, Nashville, TN 37201. Telephone: 615-255-2971.

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) introduced its Technical Information Service (TIS) in the spring of 1985 which is similar to its earlier technical leaflet series but in expanded format. The Technical Reports are published as a periodic feature of the AASLH magazine and back numbers are available for sale individually as well. The reports "emphasize new developments in the field and provide more exhaustive treatments of technical topics" that are of particular interest to those working in museums and historical agencies.

SAA Automated Archival Information Program

Contact: Lisa Weber, Society of American Archivists, 600 South Federal, Chicago, IL 60605. Telephone: 312-922-0140.

The SAA began operating the Automated Archival Information Program in July 1985 under a two-year grant from NEH. One component of the project is a "centralized clearinghouse for information about archival automation efforts." While not fully developed as yet, its eventual goals are to compile and disseminate information about specific hardware and software currently in use by archival repositories, archival automation efforts, training opportunities, and a bibliography of recent articles about automation that would be useful to archivists.

Clearinghouse on State Archives and Records Management Programs

Contact: Wayne Masterman, The Council of State Governments, Iron Works Pike, P. O. Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578. Telephone: 606-252-2291.

The National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA) became an affiliate of the Council of State Governments (CSG) in the spring of 1986. As part of this new relationship, the Council is establishing a clearinghouse for state archival and records management information that will collect and make available copies of program organization charts, records and archival statutes and regulations, budgets, planning and program monitoring documents, manuals, handbooks, brochures, job description requirements, and job descriptions. This material will be filed at CSG and made available to state programs upon request.

National Information Center for Local Government Records (NICLOG)

Contact: Marilyn Ryall, Coordinator, NICLOG, AASLH, 172 Second Avenue North, Suite 102, Nashville, TN 37201. Telephone: 615-255-2971.

NICLOG was established in 1984 with grant funds from NHPRC and the Mellon Foundation to promote better management of local government records. Operating out of the AASLH headquarters, it is "a consortium of professional and public administration associations interested in improving the efficiency of local government and preserving essential historical sources among its records." Its planned resources include a reference collection comprising such items as model ordinances, sample forms, and technical documents, a guidebook illustrating the basic principles and techniques for local government records management, and an introductory audiovisual program. It is also planning to install a toll-free number to answer inquiries.

AIIM Resource Center

Contact: Olga Diomondis or Jacqueline Viranda, Association for Information and Image Management, 1100 Wayne Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Telephone: 301-587-8202.

The Association for Information and Image Management provides a document indexing and copying service for its members and outside researchers that focuses on micrographics, optical disk, CD-ROM, video disk, records management, and other areas of information management. Its central feature is an index to articles appearing in some 90 journals and other professional literature. Users can request assistance by telephone or use the files maintained in the AIIM offices. AIIM is an accredited ANSI standards developer and provides technical assistance in the above disciplines. All publications are available for sale and announced in an annual publications catalog plus the AIIM journal and newsletter.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources

Contact: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, Syracuse University, 030 Huntington Hall, Syracuse, NY 13244-2340. Telephone: 315-423-3640.

ERIC is included in this catalog as much for its potential value as for its current coverage of archives- and records-related information. There is a common misimpression among archivists that ERIC will not accept documents with archival subject matter. On the contrary, the Information Resources acquisitions director expressed considerable enthusiasm about expanding ERIC's coverage of archival literature. Some significant records-related documents have been included during the last several years, but they represent only a small fraction of those produced by archivists that meet the criteria. ERIC carries citations for a wide range of library and information science literature and should be consulted by archivists who are pursuing research with a theoretical or practical basis in these fields.

National Technical Information Service (NTIS)

Contact: NTIS, Department of Commerce, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161. Telephone: 703-487-4630.

This agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce was created to provide a central source within the federal government for technical information. It collects and disseminates the products of federally sponsored research and development projects, foreign technical reports, and other analyses prepared by national, state, and local government agencies and their contractors or grantees. It currently holds some two million titles, available in either paper copies or microfiche. NTIS publishes 27 different weekly newsletters abstracting the documents it receives. An annual subscription to the Library and Information Science newsletter, the one most likely to contain information of interest to records practitioners, costs $60.

ARL Systems and Procedures Exchange Center (SPEC)

Contact: Maxine Sitts, SPEC, Office of Management Studies, Association of Research Libraries, 1527 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: 202-232-8656.

The Office of Management Studies of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) produces ten "SPEC kits" per year. They are collections of statistics and illustrative documents from member libraries on specific topics related to academic library operations, problems, and approaches. Recent issues have been devoted to such topics as photocopy services, cooperative collection development, and preservation education. The SPEC kits are available by subscription and may also be purchased individually. While designed for librarians, they could also prove useful to archivists in management positions who face many of the same problems as their library colleagues. Archivists working in any of the 118 ARL member institutions already have ready access to the kits.

Museum Reference Center

Contact: Catherine D. Scott, Chief Librarian, Museum Reference Center, Smithsonian Institution Libraries, Arts and Industries Building, Room 2235, Washington, DC 20560. Telephone: 202-357-3101.

The Museum Reference Center, operating in the Smithsonian Institution Libraries since 1974, provides central library, information, and bibliographic services for museum professionals and researchers both inside the Smithsonian and worldwide. It focuses on the work and products of museums, galleries, historical societies, science and technology centers, zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, planetariums, outdoor parks, and historical sites in the U.S. and around the world. The Museum Reference Center houses more than 1400 books and 800 serials relating to the history, philosophy, and operation of museums. Its collections include brochures, events schedules, and other descriptive items from over 1800 museums in the United States, associations for museum professionals, and foreign museums as well as extensive subject files that contain largely unpublished items such as plans and feasibility studies for new museums, financing and budgets, staffing and personnel management, community relations, and the like. The Museum Reference Center provides a unique and potentially valuable resource for any archivist working in a museum or with a combination of manuscript and artifact collections.

APPENDIX B

Projected Budget for the Information Center Described in Structural and Service Option B

This budget itemizes all of the expenses of a free-standing center, one operating independently of any organization or institution. The projected expense figures could change if a parent organization could provide in-kind support. For instance, the National Archives might be able to provide office space and eliminate the rent charges. Also, it should be understood that the projected income is based on guesses of how much organizations will be willing to pay to receive the center's services. Actual payments may be significantly higher or lower depending on the negotiations that occur during the implementation phase.

Based on the attached projections, the clearinghouse could become nearly self-supporting by the end of its third year. A grant or grants totaling $300,000 would cover the shortfall between projected income and expenses during the first three years as well as provide a cushion of more than $50,000 for unexpected contingencies.

Summary of Income and Expenses

	START-UP	1ST YEAR	2ND YEAR	3RD YEAR
Projected income		55,500	187,000	263,000
Projected expenses	34,045	204,991	241,631	268,047
Shortfall (expenses less income)	34,045	149,491	54,631	5,047

TOTAL SHORTFALL FOR THREE YEARS = $243,214

Detailed Budget

INCOME	START-UP	1ST YEAR	2ND YEAR	3RD YEAR
Memberships (1st year ½ price because only 5 kits produced)				
Tier I (targeted at larger institutions), $500/yr: receive 2 copies of each kit, newsletter, & other free pubs, 1 copy of priced pubs, unlimited use of reference & referral services. 1st yr, 50 members; 2nd yr, 100; 3rd yr, 150		12,500	50,000	75,000
Tier II (targeted at small institutions & individuals), $250/yr: receive 1 copy of each kit, newsletter & other free pubs, reduced rates on priced pubs, limited use of reference & referral services. 1st yr, 100 members; 2nd yr, 150; 3rd yr, 200		12,500	37,500	50,000
Professional organizations (rates and services negotiated individually based on ability to pay & level of interest, amounts shown are desirable projections)				
Primary, $3000/yr (SAA)		1,500	3,000	3,000
Secondary, $2000/yr (AASLH, ARMA)		2,000	4,000	4,000
Tertiary, $1000/yr (NAGARA, ALA, SLA, AIIM, local govt assns (5))		4,500	9,000	9,000
Subscriptions				
Kits, $200/yr: 100 subs, 1st yr (only 5 kits produced, subs ½ price); 200, 2nd yr; 300, 3rd yr		10,000	40,000	60,000
Sales				
Kits, $25/copy of individual kits: 100 per kit, 1st yr; 150, 2nd yr; 200, 3rd yr		12,500	37,500	50,000
Directory of Archives & Records Information Sources ($40 each)			4,000	8,000
Other			2,000	4,000
TOTAL INCOME		55,500	187,000	263,000

EXPENSES				
Start-up costs				
Purchase of basic reference materials (100 titles @ $50 each) (assumes donations from cooperating organizations)	5,000			
Equipment				
1 PC per staff member (w/extra memory, modem, disks, software) ($3,000 x 3)	9,000			
1 letter quality printer, 1 dot matrix printer ($500 each)	1,000			
1 laser printer			3,500	
Shelving & filing equipment	2,000			
Office furniture	2,500			
Design services, including logo	2,500			
Publicity				
Design & print brochure, info packets	1,500	1,000	750	500

	START-UP	1ST YEAR	2ND YEAR	3RD YEAR
Exhibits at professional conferences				
Design of exhibit, purchase of equipment		2,000		
Space rental & shipping for 4 confs in 2nd yr, 8 in 3rd year; staffed with director & local liaisons)			2,000	4,000
Staff (assumes 25% benefits, 5% raises per year)				
1 FTE professional @ $39,000/yr (GS-13 equiv)		48,975	51,424	53,995
1 FTE paraprf/technical @ $27,172/yr (GS-11 equiv)		33,965	35,663	37,446
1 FTE clerical @ $16,040/yr (GS-6 equiv)		20,651	21,684	22,768
Contractual work				
Research & writing for kits ($500 honorarium per kit)		2,500	5,000	5,000
Copyediting & proofreading	200	1,500	1,500	1,500
Legal & accounting services ($5000/year)	3,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Information/clearinghouse specialist	2,500	1,000	500	500
Space (includes rent & utilities)				
400 sq ft office space @ $40/ft and 100 sq ft storage space @ $30/ft in downtown DC		19,000	19,000	19,000
Book purchases & subscriptions ($500/mo)		6,000	6,000	6,000
Printing and binding				
Kits (600 copies per title; 5 titles 1st year, 10 titles 2nd & 3rd years; $3-4 per copy)		10,500	21,000	21,000
Newsletter (2000 copies, 6 issues per year), $0.50/copy		6,000	6,000	6,000
Other (Directory, select bibliographies, management and technical reports)		6,000	10,000	14,000
Order processing (storage and packing, financial tracking, maintaining customer data base, preparing labels) $2 per item, 2000 items 1st yr rising to 10,000 3rd year		4,000	10,000	20,000
Supplies ($400/month)	300	4,800	4,800	4,800
Photocopying ($200/mo 1st yr rising to $300/mo 3rd yr)	400	2,400	3,000	3,600
Telephone				
Purchase equipment, install lines	600			
Use charges @ $600/month with 5% rate increases		7,200	7,560	7,938
ALANET (electronic mail, data base access, etc.)	45	1,000	1,250	1,500
Postage ($1-2 per item, 2000 items 1st year rising to 10,000 3rd year; 6 issues of newsletter @ $1500/yr; reference & general office mail, $1000/yr)	500	5,500	10,000	17,500
Travel				
Director, 6 confs/yr @ $1000/ea		6,000	6,000	6,000
Assistant, 4 confs/yr @ $1000/ea		4,000	4,000	4,000
Advisory board meetings:				
3 during 1st year; 2 per year thereafter, 6 members (SAA, AASLH, ARMA, NAGARA, NARA or other fed agency, local govt rep) @ $500/ea per meeting	3,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	34,045	204,991	241,631	268,047

APPENDIX C

Archival Information
Clearinghouse Project Conferences

PARTICIPANTS IN MAY 8-9, 1985, CONFERENCE

Name/Title or Institution/Representing

Lewis J. Bellardo
President, NAGARA
KY Dept for Libraries and Archives
National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators

Edmund Berkeley, Jr.
University of Virginia
Society of American Archivists

Nicholas Burckel
University of Chicago
American Library Association

Frank Burke
Acting Archivist of the U.S.
National Archives and Records Administration

Rosanne Butler
Field Archives Coordinator, NARA
National Archives and Records Administration

Richard Cameron
NEH
National Endowment for the Humanities

Ann Morgan Campbell
Executive Director, SAA
Society of American Archivists

Paul Chestnut
Manuscript Division, LC
Library of Congress

Katherine Coram
Agency Services Division, NARA
National Archives and Records Administration

Bruce W. Dearstyne
Executive Director, NAGARA
Director, External Progs., NY State Archives
National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators

Gerald George
Executive Director, AASLH
American Association for State and Local History

Richard Jacobs
Acting Executive Director, NHPRC
National Historical Publications and Records Commission

Elizabeth Mann
Florida State University
Special Libraries Association

John Noble
City of Rochester (NY) Records Center
Association of Records Managers and Administrators

Nancy Sahli
Archives Specialist, NHPRC
National Historical Publications and Records Commission

Norman Sims
CSG
Council of State Governments

George Vogt
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Victoria Irons Walch
Consulting Archivist
Clearinghouse Project Coordinator

Molly Wolfe
Information Consultant
Informatics General Corporation
Clearinghouse Project Consultant

Lucinda Leonard
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Name/Title or Institution/Representing

Carol Becker
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Chief, Information Staff, Dept. of State
Association of Federal Information Resources Management

Richard Belding
Deputy State Archivist, Kentucky
Local Government Liaison, NAGARA
National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators

Lewis J. Bellardo
State Archivist, Kentucky
President, NAGARA
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Frank Burke
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Robert L. Chartrand
Senior Specialist, Information Policy and Technology, CRS
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Katherine Coram
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Bruce W. Dearstyne
Executive Director, NAGARA
Director, External Progs., NY State Archives
National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators

Barbara Greene
Associate Professor, Political Science
Central Michigan University
National Association of Counties

David Herschler
Records Advisor, Dept. of State
Society for History in the Federal Government

Helen Hudgens
President, NACRC
Coconino County (AZ) Recorder
National Association of County Recorders and Clerks

Richard Jacobs
Acting Executive Director, NHPRC
National Historical Publications and Records Commission

Helen Kawagoe
1st Vice President, IIMC
Carson (CA) City Clerk
International Institute of Municipal Clerks

John J. Landers
Director, Office Information Systems
U.S. General Services Administration

Nancy Minter
Manager, Municipal Reference Service
National League of Cities

Anna K. Nelson
Project Director
Committee on the Records of Government

Daniel Nissenbaum
Assistant to Director for Data & Information Services, ICMA
International City Management Association

Edward L. Purcell
Executive Editor
Council of State Governments

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National Archives and Records Administration

George Vogt
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National Historical Publications and Records Commission

Victoria Irons Walch
Consulting Archivist
Clearinghouse Project Coordinator

NOTES

[1]Society of American Archivists, Task Force on Goals and Priorities, *Planning for the Archival Profession* (Chicago, 1986): 31.

[2]Lisa B. Weber, ed., *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the States* (Atlanta, 1984): 48, 66.

[3]Robert Sloan, city secretary for the City of Dallas (TX) and chair of the International Institute of Municipal Clerks' Records Management Committee, supplied information from the latest study of municipal clerks prepared by the IIMC indicating "that 88 percent of the clerks in the U.S. and Canada are responsible for all or most of the records generated or received by their municipalities. The same report reveals that a majority of clerks come from smaller cities and towns with limited budgets and small office staffs. Most have no formal training in records management or archives administration and all have other duties besides records. Most, however, understand the importance of the records in their care and want information to help them make the right decision regarding records."

[4]David Bearman, "1982 Survey of the Archival Profession," *American Archivist* (Spring 1983): 237.

[5]Mailing from Jim Bencivenga, Director, Information Services, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, dated December 22, 1986, which included an Executive Summary of the report, *ERIC in Its Third Decade*.

[6]Paula Degen, "Light Under a Bushel: The Smithsonian's Museum Reference Center Offers Aid to Local Museums," *History News* 35 (February 1980): 5-8.

[7]There is relatively little critical or analytical literature about the role clearinghouses and other information centers play in professional fields. Much of what is available was written in the early 1970s and describes operations limited to indexing and distributing printed documents rather than the more flexible and dynamic types of services that are necessary to respond to the expectations and needs of the records community.

This project employed an information specialist, Molly Wolfe, who provided significant insights and guidance on the actual benefits records practitioners could expect to receive from the establishment of an information resource center. She conducted a workshop during the May conference designed to help the participants evaluate current sources of information used by records practitioners, identify gaps and areas of greatest need within the current system, and rank the specific products and services that a centralized information center could provide.

The consulting archivist also located a report prepared by Carol Baker and other employees of Applied Management Sciences, Inc., and Cuadra Associates, Inc., in the early 1980s under a contract from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Carol Baker, Susan King, and Judith Wanger, "Human Services Information Clearinghouses: A Discussion of Policy Issues" (September 1981). Available through ERIC, document number ED 208895.] It is the final report of a project that studied the functions and policies of the some 71 human services clearinghouses then in existence. The report contains general analyses of the operations and services of clearinghouses and has proven useful as a guide to analyzing the needs of the records community and developing a model for implementation in the records field. As part of the study, Ms. Baker and her colleagues wrote in detail about many of the issues records practitioners must grapple with in, first, determining the need for and, second, devising an implementation plan for improved information services: missions, objectives, and functions of an information center; management and operational considerations; cost recovery; overlap, duplication, and competition among services; and evaluating the center's performance.

[8]Baker, p. I.1-I.2.

[9]In examining the expectations and potential benefits to be derived from establishing a resource center, the Baker report draws an important distinction that was also emphasized by the project's information specialist, Molly Wolfe, in her May presentation. It is important to understand the difference in intent and effect between information dissemination and information diffusion. *Dissemination* means informing a target audience about the availability of information on a given topic and/or providing that information directly. *Diffusion* means providing information in order to bring about behavioral change, to encourage adoption of specific innovations and/or practices, and to bring about greater research utilization.

Clearinghouses and resource centers can be effective means of dissemination but are not necessarily good at achieving diffusion. Research has shown that face-to-face communications between innovators and practitioners is required for encouraging acceptance and widespread implementation of new practices and ideas. In other words, just making information available to people does not guarantee that they will make good use of it and change their methods for the better. Evidently practitioners find first-hand experience, the experiences of trusted colleagues, and information obtained at conferences and workshops to be more trustworthy bases for instigating change than research reports and other written materials because it is easier to judge how closely the conditions under which the innovation was initially tried resemble the user's own situation.

Many of the participants in this project supported this assumption, citing informal contacts at professional meetings and conversations with fellow professionals as important channels of information exchange. An information center might facilitate some of this exchange, perhaps connecting two people who do not already know each other, but it will never replace the old, informal methods.

A clearinghouse or resource center cannot be expected to be a panacea, solving all the ills besetting a professional field. But it can provide useful services, especially in a field like archives and records administration, where practitioners often work in relative isolation and are confronted with rapidly changing technical and legal conditions. As long as expectations are realistic, it can be a worthwhile endeavor. [Baker, p. I.6-I.7.]

[10]Charles Phillips and Patricia Hogan, *The Wages of History: The AASLH Employment Trends and Salary Survey* (Nashville, 1984). Charles Phillips and Patricia Hogan, *A Culture At Risk* (Nashville, 1984).

[11]The Baker report has an extensive discussion of budgeting, financial planning, and the factors involved in attempting cost recovery [Baker, pp. 2.9, 5.5.]. Molly Wolfe also focused on the relative costs of specific products and services in her May presentation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A project of this kind would be impossible without the concerned and sustained participation of a wide range of individuals, institutions, and organizations. I would like to express my appreciation to the many who contributed their time, intellect, and imagination toward the goal of improving information resources for archivists and records practitioners. Those who participated in the two project conferences are listed by name in Appendix A. They spent three intense days helping to clarify the issues and define the information needs of the records community; each spoke eloquently about the particular concerns of the practitioners he or she represented. The project's information consultant, Molly Wolfe, offered invaluable aid in developing a conceptual base for understanding information flow and appraising the array of potential products and services that the conference attendees proposed. A gratifyingly large number of individuals took the time to review the draft of the final report that circulated in 1986 and wrote thoughtful and thought provoking responses that led in many cases to revisions of the text to clarify or expand on key points. Maxine Sitts of the Association of Research Libraries' Systems and Procedures Exchange Center generously shared the experience and insights she has gained in running a successful information service for a closely related audience and provided some otherwise elusive hard figures that were used to develop the projected three-year operating budget in Appendix B. The NHPRC deserves thanks for supplying the financial support for the project as does its staff for providing continuing intellectual and moral support during the progress of the work. Finally, special thanks to Bruce Dearstyne who gave his usual 150 percent to the work of this project as he does to all of his many archival endeavors. He kept the project on course and contributed substantially to the intellectual content of the report.

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